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MODERN BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

NEWMAN SMYTH

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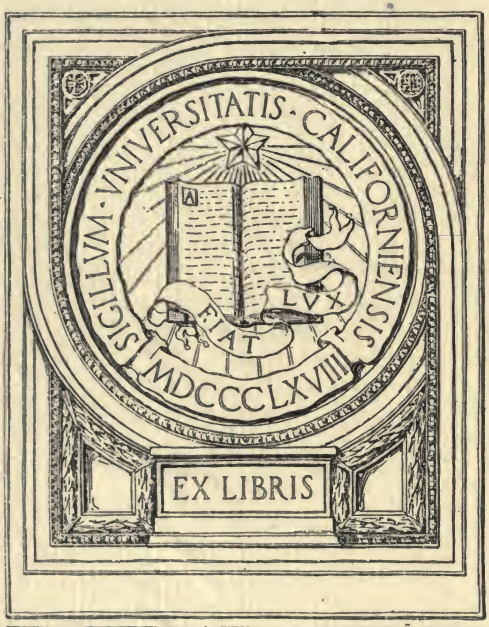

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MODERN BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

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BY

Newman Smyth

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
Charles Scribner's Sons
1910

BT921
S68

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Published March, 1910

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This little book had its origin in a lecture which was given on the Drew foundation at Hackney College of the University of London. It has since been recast and enlarged in order that in this form it may reach the general public.

The thought of our age has thrown a shadow of unreality over the belief in personal immortality. There are many who ask how this faith may be intelligently held in the midst of modern knowledge. To all such readers, who would have a reasonable hope in the life everlasting, these pages are now offered.

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MODERN BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

MAN'S belief in immortality is still essentially the same as it was when Socrates trusted himself to it, while he drank the fatal hemlock. It is the irrepressible faith of man in his own survival value. It is the inexhaustible confidence of our human minds and hearts in our power to think and to love on hereafter because we can think and love now. Socrates' refusal to think of himself as dead was the supreme self-affirmation of his personal life.

Although belief in the future life remains the same, men's conceptions of it change from age to age, and they must be adapted to the general knowledge of the times.

In our day science has seemed to throw into uncertainty the hope of personal life hereafter. Much unbelief lies darkly around our faith. As, when one stands directly under an electric light in the street, he can see distinctly everything near him, but the dazzling little light just above him renders the sky dark, and blots out the stars; so within the circle of scientific illumination we may lose vision of the heavens. But man cannot go far without some guiding sense of eternal truths; and the old faiths, though sometimes obscured, are always reappearing. At the present time a widening knowledge of ourselves and the universe is bringing out more clearly some reasons for the human hope of the life to come.

It is quite true that at first modern science did not seem to be a friendly visitor in the old home of inherited re-

ligious beliefs. Modern astronomy put the heavens far from us. Modern physics bound all things together in a chain of unbroken sequences. Modern biology traced continuous lines of life back to the earliest and simplest forms of life in the dust of the earth. A microscopic cell is found to contain the potential energy of all birth and becoming. And, latest of all, modern psychology, turning from merely introspective study of self-consciousness, and seeking to become one of the exact sciences, would have us know ourselves in its experimental laboratories.

So much new knowledge has proved disconcerting and baffling to many who would not willingly be dispossessed of their cherished beliefs. But new knowledge always raises new questions; and it also helps us over some old difficulties. In the progress of knowledge we

are very much like engineers who should begin to run a tunnel through an Alp. If they should lay down their tools and stop work part way, they would only have burrowed into the darkness. Give them time and patience, let them continue along the same true lines on which they began; and eventually they will work themselves out again into the light—the same light that is always shining. So is it with our scientific investigations. It is still the little knowledge, as Lord Bacon said, that makes atheists of us. Partial researches often end in the darkness and dampness. But from light through the dark into light; from God through nature unto God; from the Spirit through human history to the Spirit;—such is the way and the toil of the more patient and resourceful thinking. So the new natural science, carried clear

through, may lead out to a new spirituality. Doubt may settle where knowledge stops; but hope burns bright where reason follows truth straight on and on.

It is not now too much to say that modern science has pressed forward far enough to change its tone of denial, and to give forth a more reassuring note for religious faith and hope. Socrates might gather from recent researches into the structure of matter, and the possible relations of body and mind, fresh material for his argument for immortality, if he were here inquiring and conversing with us, as he was wont to do among his friends. Our natural sciences would not dismay Socrates; they might bring much fine oil for him to change into the light of his immortal hope.

In such confidence then we would search our modern knowledge for any

light it may throw upon our belief in man's survival after death. For this purpose the first question for us to ask is whether modern inquiries enable us to know ourselves better. How are we to think of the personal life? How may we now best conceive of the supreme fact of personality?

An answer will be forthcoming, if we take from modern science one of its ruling ideas,—the conception of matter in terms of energy. Natural science, that is, no longer regards a material thing merely as an inert corpuscle, or as composed of so many indissoluble atoms. It does not indeed undertake to say what the ultimate nature of anything is; it recognizes different things by what they do; it knows them by their modes of action. They are forms of motion. Thus no one knows what electricity is; but a

vast science has been formed and utilized from investigation of its waves and lines of force. The physicist in the class-room will go to the black-board and use complicated mathematical symbols and equations to demonstrate the properties of radium, and its various transformations. In short, science has become a study of energetics. Now, then, we would accept this ruling idea of energy, and use it as a light in looking into our personal life, in thinking of our minds and wills.

It would carry us beyond our present purpose to discuss critically this idea in its philosophical bearings, or in relation to different views propounded in recent books of psychology. But we must begin with this conception of personal life as self-conscious energy, for we shall have to return to it again and again in our reasoning concerning the possible

continuance of the personal life hereafter. Its meaning may become plainer as we proceed.

In this way we are to think of ourselves as centres and sources of energy. Our self-conscious life is one continuous flow of energy, ever changing its forms of feeling and thought, yet remaining throughout the same distinctive force of mind and will. We have been accustomed to think of the soul as though it were a certain fixed substance, something intangible and unimaginable, but a substantial entity. It has been regarded as a half-materialized ghost, retaining a semblance of the body. It has been imagined to be an emanation that departs from the body at death; and apparitions of it haunt men's dreams. In philosophies that have been swept bare of superstitions, the soul is still left in the background

of consciousness as a necessary but undefinable postulate of the unity of personal being. Lying darkly beneath our consciousness of our mental processes, the soul has also been regarded as bound in some way impossible of detection to the body. But the newer psychology has relegated to the lumber-room of outworn ideas all this old-fashioned conception of the soul. As the former idea of a specific vital force is no longer recognized in the biological laboratories, so the living soul seems to have disappeared from recent experimental studies of mind and body. Not only in our busy social religion do we moderns take little anxious thought about the to-morrow of our own souls; as Wilberforce in the thick of the emancipation conflict once replied to a bigot that he was so concerned about those poor negroes that he had no time to

think of his soul; more than this, nowadays the confident physiological psychologist, in the midst of his investigations of bodily and mental actions and reactions, does not seem to know whether he has any soul left worth thinking about. He has been occupied of late in telling us much that the ancients never knew concerning the time reactions of sensations, the rising and vanishing of ideas, like bubbles, in the stream of consciousness, the subliminal self, and so on; he has displayed great ingenuity in examining the springs and wires of the physiological apparatus of our mental processes and results. And he may rest for a while scientifically content to conceive of himself as the sum-total of the manifold acts and states that he has succeeded in disclosing, although how he can sum himself up at all he cannot tell, and he prefers to put aside

such inquiry as too metaphysical for his exact science of mental phenomena. Nevertheless the ancients raised the first and the last question concerning man's knowledge of himself, when they made that inquiry; and our most advanced mental science is brought to a stand-still, as before a dead wall, when confronted with this question of fact concerning the unity of the personal life.

If we begin and end with such investigation into ourselves from the physiological side only, we shall find ourselves left, as it were, in the middle of the tunnel. But self-introspection does not stop with results that leave us wholly in the dark as to the nature of our own life. The more we learn of the relations between body and mind, the more we find reason to credit our instinctive sense that this personal life which we know, cannot be wholly accounted for

by a purely physical theory of it. We need not indeed revert to former notions of the soul, or reject any new knowledge of the interdependence of mind and matter in our consciousness; but rather we need to think evolutionary ideas through, and to learn much more in the newer ways concerning ourselves, if it is possible. The way out for a true faith is always the way forward. This is now becoming clearly evident. For just when it seemed as though science were about to reduce the spiritual entirely to the material, matter itself escaped from all previous conceptions of it; and the old atomic theory, that had come to be regarded as the end of all wisdom in that direction, has been broken up, and transformed into subtler and more ethereal conceptions of matter. The atom is no longer regarded as indivisible; it can

disintegrate into something still more elemental. It is matter still, but a different kind of matter than we had supposed. All this new research leaves us as before in a system of natural law; but it appears to be a more open system. Nature is not iron-clad, and inaccessible to waves of influence from a higher realm beyond these visible horizons. Energies that are not *of* space may enter into space; even as thought in us has no spatial dimensions. There are astronomical indications that all the stars are numbered, and the constellations are grouped within the attractions of a finite universe. What, then, is there conceivable around and beyond them all? What is there not of them but within them all? In what infinity of Mind and Will do all things exist? Search the material universe through and through, as far as thought may go,

and nature discovers itself to be an open system; at the confines of all knowledge it does not close around us as a prison-house; we stand as before open windows, breathing a vital air, and looking out into vistas of light beyond light.

So, likewise, a gross materialistic view seemed at first to be confirmed by the demonstration of concurrent changes of the brain in every action of the mind. But we are now understanding that what has been proved is the perfection of the brain as an organ of mind. And even from the point of view of modern surgery, there are not wanting intimations that there is much more to be learned concerning the mind's power to control the brain as its organ—its power even, when some parts of the brain have been injured, to avail itself of some unused area of its brain, and

by intelligent training and patience to organize some other brain-cells and their connections for its use. Not to enter, however, into these recondite and as yet not fully determined inquiries, it may fairly be said that modern psychology, working farther through its physiological stage, gives promise of coming forth more spiritually minded.

We are not, then, in our day to lose our own souls at the bidding of a partial science. There is no good and sufficient reason to suppose that in our free, pulsing, personal life, we have been put together like so many pieces in a mechanical assembling-room; a more hopeful task awaits us when, in the light of the modern idea of energy, we proceed to inquire, What is this personal kind of energy? What is this potency of mind, this dynamic of will, of which man is self-conscious? For personal

power is the culminating fact of nature. The human will is the summation of the struggling forces of evolution before it; self-consciousness is the focus of all the light of life.

This dominant personal energy, it is to be observed, is at once the best known and the least known of all the powers. It is best known because we are immediately perceptive of it in every act; it is the least known because there is nothing known before it into which we can resolve our self-perceptive life. By our inner possession of it we understand other forms of energy in the world without us; but they do not serve to interpret it to ourselves. We could not think of, or call by name, the forces of nature, if we had not first become aware of will within ourselves. But that is to be derived from nothing before our own action. It comes to us,

this rich reality of energizing life, very much as Melchizedec came to Israel of old, without father or mother, and with a blessing from the most High. Yet there is one way in which we may apprehend it truly, and grow in our knowledge of it. It is the way opened by science, which knows things by observing what they do. Here, likewise, in knowing what our personal being is, we have to watch its behavior. We need to learn all that we may of the nature of mind by observing its conduct in the conditions amid which it now works. You are aware of yourself as you think and will; you know yourself as the same self throughout all your thinking and willing. Whatever the ultimate entity may be, the self is known to itself in action. Personality is manifested to itself immediately, and then to others, through its energizing.

Before pursuing, however, the line of thought just suggested, we pause for a moment to observe the better standing-ground for belief in a possible continuance of life beyond death, which is to be gained when we leave one side the common idea of the soul as a substance of some kind, and take the more recent idea of a spiritual energy as our point of departure; when we begin, not with the metaphysical idea of being, or some spiritual entity, but rather with our knowledge of ourselves as so much actual personal energy. In this way of looking at it, an immediate advantage is that we are at once relieved from the confusion that comes over us when we try to imagine how this invisible, but substantial soul-entity can exist either in the body or out of it. This idea of a soul, however sublimated, has something still material clinging

to it; and everything physical, so far as we know, is subject to dissolution. The idea of a pure substance, purged of all materiality, is hard to precipitate in any mental analysis; philosophers have always labored over the notion of substance as the reality beneath all phenomenal existence; when they seem to catch it in some net of fine words, it flies away into some abstraction that cannot be grasped. This is not to say that the philosophic idea of an absolute or pure substance has not had its use, and may not be of value in metaphysical speculation; but it is directly to our present purpose to notice how well we may do without it in the effort to lay hold of our true life and its power to continue in future conditions for its activity. We lay aside some obstinate questionings concerning man's possible

survival elsewhere and otherwise, when we give up the futile attempt to imagine how in a shadowy or half-materialized way a soul may exist; when rather we reflect how inconceivable it is to suppose that such living spiritual energies as are incarnate and radiantly active in the intelligent and purposeful life of a true man, can be brought to a sudden stop by any accident from without, or ever cease to be self-contained and masterful, as they have begun to be even in these bodily limitations. The idea is a contradiction of the law of the conservation of personal energy.

Doubtless this way of regarding it will raise difficulties enough of its own; but they will arise from inability to conceive how this can be; they will not be impossibilities of reason. In this view of personality as undying energy we shall at least escape from the old

question as to the location of the point in the body where the soul resides; we shall not be embarrassed by the mediæval puzzle, how many spirits may dance upon the point of a needle. Modern science is not about to put the spiritual self out of existence because it has led us to abandon the traditional notion of soul atoms, any more than it puts matter out of existence because it has given up the received theory of material atoms. Indeed, why is it more necessary for religious belief in ourselves and our God to define what Spirit is, than it is necessary for natural science in its working creed to define what matter is? In either case we know what is experienced; we know what it is by what it does. As we have just indicated, and should keep in mind, the natural sciences, strictly speaking, are studies of conduct. Physics is a

study of the behavior of the elements; biology a study of the behavior of living cells; in short the whole evolutionary philosophy is a great generalization from the uniform course of conduct of nature. So may theology be a study of the persistent conduct of the spirit. From established modes of behavior we may draw inferences concerning the constitution or character of things natural or spiritual; but in neither case does partial or only inferential knowledge of the nature of matter or of Spirit prevent us from knowing truly what it does, and has efficient power to do. The physicist, for instance, has succeeded in carrying his demonstration of elemental matter so far back that he will speak clearly to himself of the primary materialization of the universal ether as an electron; that is to say, as it is easy to see, a possible whirl of the per-

fect solid, elastic, ethereal liquid, bearing a charge of negative electricity immersed in a positive; so a theologian might be indulged if he should attempt to define his idea of a spirit as an individual form of a spiritual Omnipresence, in which it has its being, while carrying in itself a limited charge of will. In both directions, while definitions may serve a working purpose as symbols, and may be formed from the facts of behavior which are within our experience, they carry us beyond our conceptual powers; we cannot visualize the ultimate nature either of matter or mind.

From interesting speculations in these directions, we turn now to consider more closely what promise of continued life hereafter may be observed in the actual working now and here of the personal energy of man.

Several qualities in the conduct of personal life are distinctive and of prophetic significance. Man's mental conduct distinguishes him specifically from all animate existence before him.

In self-conscious activity we are aware of a unifying energy, which makes and keeps us ourselves. Normally we are known to ourselves not as a mere mathematical series or sum of mental sequences, but as personal wholes. This integrity of being, this wholeness of mental experience, is constitutive of our personal individuality; it is not broken by sleep, it is undestroyed by the effacing touch of time, it endures though memory fails, it persists while death approaches; it remains indissoluble so long as any trace of consciousness continues. Now, this individual wholeness of personality is an outstanding spiritual fact; it is positive and su-

preme. No outward environment, no favoring circumstance, could have bestowed it upon a being who was not first in himself capable of it. His selfhood has grown from its own root in the unseen and the eternal. The continuous stream of self-conscious life flows from some original fount that is itself underived and eternal. So, at all events, we are compelled to conclude by the failure of every successive attempt to explain personal energy of being from any purely material causation. Such material explanations break down sooner or later before some fact of our self-knowledge; and they are swept away by any rising flood of moral life and power.

There are, however, certain abnormal mental conditions in which the identity of personal life seems to be interrupted, and sometimes for con-

siderable intervals entirely lost. There are also instances of dual personality, in which one may be possessed with several seemingly different selves. All such intermittent mental conditions are connected with more or less obvious nervous derangements, or other recondite physiological changes. Do these breaks in conscious personal identity, accompanying as they do physiological processes, bring into question the idea of an underlying and permanent self? They certainly do indicate an intimate interdependence between mind and body, the very subtlety and complexity of which open more future possibilities of mental possession and mastery of matter than they close. Such remarkable abnormal instances not only show how much remains to be understood before we shall know the farthest reach of our powers; but also

they indicate that, when we shall know ourselves in the full extent of our physical relations, we may discover ourselves to be endowed with aptitudes and faculties for spiritual perception and activity as yet unused and undeveloped. However that may be, these abnormal phenomena of personal consciousness tend to confirm more than to disprove a latent and potential self-identifying personality. They are interruptions, not irrevocable losses of identity. Usually, after a time, the person comes to himself. The true self recalls the wandering self. The man is himself again. If this resumption of an interrupted and in some instances seemingly utterly lost selfhood, can occur in this body and this side death, a presumption is thereby brought into the evidence for the survival of the same self through death, and in some intelligent subjec-

tion of the elementary conditions of conscious life beyond the grave. It would carry us too far from our immediate purpose to enter into a detailed analysis of these outlying phenomena of intermittent and plural consciousness; it is enough for our reasoning to emphasize the fact that all such phenomena are far from being evidences of our utter materiality; they look toward spiritual freedom rather than toward physical bondage; for they indicate a self-regenerative power in personality.

This leads us to notice another distinctive quality of the personal life—its self-formative energy.

In a very real sense every man is self-made. He has no little to do in making his own soul. We are wont to say that one has a soul from his birth. Then we wonder just when the soul enters into the body. This whole way

of thinking about it is too mechanical and confusing; as though the body were a house, and the soul a tenant coming into it when it is ready for him to begin house-keeping in it. Evolutionary thought is truer than this to the divine law of growth. It recognizes the law of co-ordinate growth, the fact that God has made things to grow together for some far-off end. It traces lines of parallel development not only between different parts of organisms, but also between the entire physical and mental sides of life. The beginnings of intelligence lie far back. Some botanists even discern preliminary signs of intelligence in the apex of the root of a plant; and biologists notice in the behavior of the simplest microscopic organisms indications of a capacity to learn by experiment and to direct their motions. The determinants of mind

entered the creation long before man came on the scene. An infant of days has inborn capacity to become a definite spiritual individuality; it is a soul in the making. That is a spiritual germ and birth. At what time, in what first acts of distinct consciousness and will, it becomes a self-centred soul, a closed circle, as it were, of definite personality —this occurs before any memory of it, and is hidden from us behind the veil of our lowly origins. But the full-grown spiritual individuality is the final and positive fact of experience.

Moreover, we know that in us personal life is a constant process of self-integration. We must be always busy with ourselves in bringing diverse elements of our experience day by day into working and happy harmony, preserving amid all changes our whole-heartedness. All natural

growth in some sense does that; evolution is integration; but this natural force of life in man's mental and moral self-enlargement and self-preservation is raised to its highest power. Do we not have to learn, often through hard discipline and severe self-control, how to keep our poise of spirit, to maintain a cheerful whole-heartedness amid baffling changes, and sometimes heart-breaking shocks?—in enduring which we may be sorely bruised, cast down but not destroyed; and from which, if we have truly lived, we shall come forth ourselves again, but glorified. True life makes us whole.

Thus the divine gift to man is not a ready-made and finished soul; it is the spiritual power to make one's self through life and death ever more capacious of love and heaven. It is the renewing self-creative power of

the spirit which is in a man. By this spirit and its exercise nature in man is lifted up to the divine from whence it came. Surely such God-likeness is something supernal—a final superlative of personal being made after the power of an endless life; it is not to be scattered and lost, as though it were a mere sublimation of some natural force, such as gravitation or chemical affinity. Man can make himself a devil or a saint; he cannot unmake himself into a beast that perishes.

Another character of personal energy is intimately associated with that just observed. It is power to make its own environment. To a large though not unlimited extent personal life may form and transform its environment. This holds true of the power of mind over its immediate bodily environment.

Thought has much to do with health. Just how much, just where the transforming, re-creative power of mind over its present embodiment begins or ends, is not as yet a matter of exact science; but the fact that it certainly has some such power, whatever may be the extent of it, is a fact of daily experience.

It seems to be a primary and general power of organic matter to repair injuries and to remake lost parts. Broadly speaking, in proportion as animal forms have become more highly organized and differentiated, this regenerative virtue has been limited; lower organisms show a far more general and diffused power to heal themselves than our bodies possess. Such loss is part of the cost of our advancement. We, however, have gained a higher power where we have lost the lower. For in a purposeful life, and to a degree un-

paralleled in the animal world, a personal being may create his own environment, make his own situations, and change his world into a heaven or hell. What preternatural power is this —what culmination of spiritual energy within the natural—which may thus create the light or the darkness of its own world; which may change a paradise into a desert, or turn a wilderness into a land of springs and blossoming?

What is this transcendent energy for good or evil which can lift itself up against heaven and blot out the sun from its sky; or, humbling itself as in the presence of One mightier than it, awaken into a holy dawn of new love and life? Truly in the exceeding great and precious promise of such life we become partakers of the divine nature; as was said by that Galilean fisherman

who had become an apostle of the Son of God.

We have thus far been uncovering the foundations which are laid in nature for the establishment of the human faith in the continuance of the personal life. We build our hope of immortality upon firm ground when we rest upon the fundamental fact of personality as the greatest power in the known world. There is nothing in science to contradict or to render unnatural this spiritual expectation of life. We may now proceed. therefore, to consider what possibilities may lie open for the active exercise of our personal energy in relation to other physical or external conditions of existence hereafter.

At this point we meet at once the old question, With what body shall we

come? Or, to put it in its modern form, What are the relations, present and prospective, between this energizing selfhood—this personal focus of mental and moral power—and the universe of external forces? If our immediate connection with these external forces is broken by the death of the body, shall this self-centred, unifying spiritual energy, of which we are conscious, prove masterful enough to find or to make for itself other living conditions amid these complex and infinitely subtle forces of the universe? In fine, has personal life attained in any of us survival value, with capacity for further and freer existence in vital touch with an external universe? Put in this way, the conception of some future embodiment seems more natural.

The answer to such questioning begins with the recognition of the present

value of the body to mind. This is a generally admitted, but too ignored truth, the full significance of which should be apprehended. Instead of puzzling ourselves overmuch by asking how mind and body can exist together hereafter, we may wonder, rather, how mind and some body can ever be expected to live apart. For so far as we can perceive, matter and mind were made to exist together. An embodied spirit is the natural end of the creation. The poet-philosopher Herder caught in a fine phrase a great truth when he said embodiment is the end of all God's ways on earth. Not spirit alone, nor body only, but mind and body, of twain made one—spirit in sensible communion with nature—the outward world attaining its end in the mental appreciation and delight in it,—this, and nothing less desirable and pure

than this, is the evident fulfilment of creation. These two, nature and mind, have a natural affinity for one another; each has been prepared and fitted for the other. One might say this match was made in heaven. It is the sacrament of the natural and the spiritual in man; and what God has thus joined together in life, let no vain wisdom of ours put asunder.

Reflect at what cost these bodies have been prepared for us. Innumerable ages have been spent in lifting the body to its present high estate, in fashioning the elements into human form and comeliness; yet there are many who say of this fair fulfilment of the age-long struggle and perfecting of living matter, "It is naught." Surpassing mediæval contempt for the flesh, a modern pietism hesitates not to pronounce judgment upon this most highly organized work

of the Almighty as though it had no objective reality, and were of no value in the eye of the spiritual man. Breaking idealism off from contact with the material world, as a dream has no touch with actuality, it would have us make believe that external things are only as we think them to be, even a salutary warning of pain but an error of thought not to be heeded, and the body in our sensible communion through it with nature a hinderance rather than a means of spiritual union with God. Shall vanity of words mock the good gift of the Creator? In spiritual exaltation shall we regard the Lord of all as beholding the consummate product of the evolution of the divine idea of body in its union with spirit, and saying, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught"? More humbly let a true and

reverent science make a new appraisal of the eternal value of some body to spirit.

Our present embodiment has the value of a thought of God that has been objectified and rendered visible. An artist can depict his vision on the canvas; the poet can give form to his imagination; human love can put itself into a word, not to be recalled, for another to have and to hold. It is of the very essence and flame of spiritual energy that it must make itself felt and visible to another. Thought and love will and can be objectified to others, living revealed and embodied in word and deed, in form and color, in literature, art, and song. Shall God be less than man? Can God do less with the divine ideas than man may do in the expression of his thoughts? If the artist can render visible to others the

loveliness in which he delights, surely the Father of spirits, who has given us eyes to see, has made also the landscape which is to be seen, new every morning and fresh every evening; and both the human eye that sees, and the nature which is seen, have value in his sight. God has brought both nature and us into actual though dependent existence before himself; and God's word once spoken is not to be repented of. What God does, he does forever.

As we reflect upon this, it needs but little scientific consideration to enable one to apprehend the priceless value of some sensitive and perceptive embodiment to the inner life. We know, for example, that the human brain has been organized and perfected at incalculable cost. It is a vast distance, for which we have no measurement, from the beginning of days when the Spirit

brooded over chaos, and when from some far mystery of nebulous light the sun was gathered and the earth took form, on through successive cycles of preparation to the age of man, who finds ready for his perceptive intelligence a system of brain-cells and their intricate connections, wherein living matter has attained a microscopic order, and a harmony more marvellous than the constellations of the skies. For his possession and use there has been wrought out this intricate brain system, which shall transmit every ray of influence from without, and prove responsive to slightest touch of every passing thought from within. The valuation of this ultimate adaptation of matter to spirit will be enhanced as biology traces the fine processes of its development and its attuning as the instrument of mind. This appreciation

of it will be still further increased if we study the natural history of the formation and adaptation of a single faculty or sense, such as the power of speech or vision.

Human speech was no sudden attainment; language no extempore effort of nature. It has been said with wisdom, as well as wit, that the reason why animals do not speak is because they have nothing to say. When mind in man had learned something to be said, it found organs of speech sufficiently developed to say it. The increasing urgency of mind, finding the organs of speech growing for its use, created the language of thought. There was here a parallelism of development, so-called; one of those suggestive parallelisms—that is, developments along different lines converging toward a future end —which are indicative of a directive

thought in evolution. The end finally attained justifies the cost of the ages spent in reaching it; language is a gift of inestimable price.

Another instance is the inestimable worth of the sense of sight. One of the fascinating chapters of natural history is the story of the growth and perfecting of the eye. It is fortunately a continuous story, running through several stages of development; and with increasing interest we may read from its beginning the life history of the organ of sight. The scientific story, one might call it the natural romance of the growth of the eye, begins with its lowly origin in the humblest walk of life. At first the sense of sight came without observation into the kingdom of nature. It began as a mere point of the external membrane or skin somewhat more sensitive to light than other parts. Some

spot of pigment felt the influence of light, and life began to respond to the presence of the sun. Some long latent power of life was awakened on earth by the dawn in the sky. And then, how it grew! Organic form succeeded form, species rose above species; and this little pigmented spot deepened, became a receptive cup, and at length developed a marvellous photographic retina, gaining a vital power either to retain a distinct image, or in the twinkling of an eye to wipe it all away. And with this wondrous retina, the eye, still developing, made for itself a crystalline lens, and added a mechanism of nerves and muscles for adapting itself instantaneously to clear definition of things both near and far—a mechanism so simple, yet so fitted to its end, that with all our science we cannot perceive by what vital chemistry it makes so quick re-

sponse. Thus—for this is only a brief summary of the story—through stage after stage of clarifying and perfecting, the eye has been called forth by the light in which it sees; as the eagle in its lofty circlings gazes at the sun, and man goes forth to his labor. From such chapters of the evolution of matter into organs for intelligent use and the joy of life, there may be gained a grateful appreciation of the worth of our bodily inheritance. As we finish reading the natural history of the eye, we may rejoice exceedingly because we have come to ourselves not only as living spirits, but as spirits having eyes to see.

Another truth, closely following this, will lead us a step further in the natural prophecy of immortality. It is the reflection that some embodiment is of permanent value to the spirit. This has been implied in what has already

been said, but it should receive distinct attention. If the body is shown to be a gift of real value to our present inner life; if embodiment is to be esteemed as a means of spiritual communion with nature, through which the personal life is greatly enriched, then it is to be regarded also as a gift not to be recalled; it is to be possessed as power that may be more fully realized in some freedom of activity and perfection of vision beyond our knowledge. We may reasonably conclude that if now some body, it may be as yet a rudimentary and imperfect body, has become of inestimable service to mind in its happy communication with the outward world, and in the mutual recognition of friends; then some bodiliness will always be of service to mind; and after this brief earth time the spirit in man may expect to receive the better thing prepared

for it, and to enter into some future embodiment more finely organized for its motion and vision in the life beyond.

This expectation of life in some better natural relationship may be said to rest upon an assumption; but it is a scientific presumption from which such hope takes wing. For it is an expectation of life which is justified by the main tendency of life so far as we can follow it from the beginning until now. It is simply to presume that life will run on the same true lines hereafter. It is to believe that it may continue beyond our sight, as it has begun within our knowledge. This is a reasonable presumption because with all its windings the way of life has not thus far returned upon itself. Nor does the energy of life show signs of giving out. Evolution stops at no half-way station; it shows no hesitancy in its onward course.

Moreover, evolution has resulted thus far not merely in the gain of more highly organized species, but it has selected and preferred more individualized life; it puts a supreme value upon the individual man. It has aimed, if we may so speak, at the development of the highest possible individuality. It has attained a result worth perpetuating in personality. The personal life has gained survival value. By the same sign it may be expected to advance to its perfection. For this much, at least, we know; that nature strives to keep what it has gained of worth. And by the same rule which it has already attained, it will also walk. The Son of Man declared a first principle of the divine working in his life when he said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Fulfilment is first principle of natural theology, as it is of Christian

divinity. He who could say out of his own luminous consciousness of the divine, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," declared this to be primal law and essential truth of all God's working, Not to destroy, but to fulfil. We do but make this first truth of the divine in nature and the life of man the assurance of our immortal hope, when we believe that our God has not prepared this body, and brought it to its present fitness, merely in the end to throw away the very idea of embodiment, as though his own work could not be carried to completion and were nothing worth. It is more profoundly natural, as it is Christian, to think that the divine conception of embodied spirit shall be fulfilled in some more celestial dispensation of mind and in larger perceptive relations to all the worlds of space.

Furthermore, in such expectation of life more abundant we are accepting, as in accordance with our natural knowledge, the first principle of the great resurrection chapter that the seed in the earth has in itself the potentiality of the flower and the fruit that shall be in the air and sunshine above. What we have need to discern clearly and assuringly is just this truth, that the body that dies is itself part and moment of a divine thought and process of spiritual embodiment; and that this body has now preparatory value in relation to the more spiritual body that shall be.

Although it is impossible to understand what a spiritual body may be like, it is a natural and simple faith to hold that we may acquire here, through bodily training and exercises, greater mental facility for the apprecia-

tion hereafter of the whole nature side of our life. Whatever may be laid up in the soul through the education of eye or ear, or skill of hand, in work and pleasure, may belong to those treasures that shall not be lost in the heavenly completion of the whole man hereafter. The artist's quick sense of the play of light and shade, and harmonies of color, the musician's perception of all sweet sounds, the artisan's skill in cunning workmanship,—these are personal acquisitions which may well form part of the preparation of this life for the larger opportunities of the world to come. This natural belief puts a future premium upon all honest work. Eternity is not to rob time of any acquired values. It is an inspiration in any study or discipline to cherish faith in its worth as an acquisition of personal power for immortality.

Nor is this all of this assurance of life. More than this, it is conceivable that there may be won through present struggle with the material world, and carried naturally through death, a power of personal energy over material forces that shall prepare us for and give us living mastery over other conditions and richer material for spiritual life and joy beyond this present world. We may thus be gaining vital power to select the external conditions, and to win our own souls from the unseen world, in which the disembodied spirit shall find its life. For this again is only to think through, from the known into the unknown, the first principle alike of biology and of divinity that what is determinant and specific in the germ is not lost in the whole subsequent development; that it all comes to fulfilment in the fruit. And for men the harvest

is the end of the world. We cannot at the same time see these present blossomings of God's thought in our nature, and doubt the future ripening of such life. And the end of the promise is not the new heavens only, but the new heavens and the new earth.

Herein lies the service of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection to the natural argument for immortality. Even in its grossest and impossible forms this doctrine has borne witness to the truth that the present life, if it is to continue after death, must go on hereafter as it has been begun, in some actual relations to the outward universe. It shall have some physical aspect and power. The spirit is made for some embodiment, and it is not to be conceived as losing an iota of its capacity for the nature side of intelligent existence. On swifter wing, and with open

vision, it is to have the freedom of the skies.

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection, it is true, like all other doctrines of faith, is under vital necessity of changing its forms and adapting its essential truth to the general conditions of thought in successive generations. In one of its earlier and crude forms, as a belief in the literal resurrection of the flesh, it is as impossible for us now to accept it, as it would be for us to receive the old Ptolemaic astronomy.

Mediæval pictures of martyrs and saints appearing in earthly apparel from above, as masterpieces of a lost art, have power still to awaken the sense of spiritual beauty—that feeling of some transcendent beauty which art in the highest always calls forth; but they no longer serve to render religious faith vivid and real. Science has indeed ta-

ken from modern art this same body of the resurrection; but it has not taken from us, and it cannot rob the human heart of the essential truth of the Easter faith in the resurrection of the dead. It is the faith that in some manner, beyond present experience and hence impossible for us now to visualize, our human life is to be continued in its wholeness; the Christian hope is in the fulfilment of the personal life as one life of body, soul, and spirit; it is faith in the completion of the person in the integrity of his whole nature. So St. Paul's profound spiritual insight discerned the law of resurrection life, the universal law of development and fulfilment, of which Christ was the first-fruits; and the law of resurrection, as it was discovered and affirmed in the profound resurrection chapter of the New Testa-

ment, is anticipatory of and true to the best evolutionary theology of our age. In whatever form it has been held, or may in time be better conceived, the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead is a perpetual denial of unbelief in the value of embodiment to spirit, and an affirmation that what God has so marvellously begun shall be carried on to full fruition. The promise is that all powers shall be put into subjection to the Lord of life. In this comprehensive promise of the life everlasting, the Christian believer may take delight in the thought that our love of nature is no passing pleasure; that in this joy of heart, as well as in all other capacities of our nature, we shall be satisfied.

As we seek to follow the natural argument for immortality, at this point another stepping-stone lies just before us on which we may find footing. The

next fact in order is the present relative imperfection of the body for the spirit. This is implied in the preceding paragraphs; it needs now to be distinctly considered. Although the body is the consummation of the organization of atomic matter for the use of mind, nevertheless we are by no means come in the flesh to the end of the conceivable possibilities of the adaptations of the natural to the spiritual life. Mind thus far has made a good beginning, but it may be only a beginning, in its control of material forces. Thus the original vague sense of touch has developed into the finer sense of taste, the discriminating sense of sound, and the localized and clear sense of sight. But no sense as yet goes so far or reaches so high as thought may imagine it to be carried. The mind would receive with immediate perception the now ultra-visible

rays; we would apprehend with more demonstrable directness the all-pervasive ether, which lies still unseen but not unknown around us. Nor need we dwell upon the partialness of our spiritual control of the elements that are transiently held in subjection to us in these bodies. These vital elements come and go, ours to utilize for a day's work, in pain escaping from our mastery, and in the end breaking loose from our will to live. Death is our final loss of control over this kind of organic matter. It is a contradiction of us. But just at this point where our reasoning is brought to a pause; where mind seems to receive a final contradiction from matter and life is denied by death, hope finds a further prospect opening before it, and faith in immortality may take a new departure. For we have this reassuring knowledge that

the body which escapes from our subjection at death is by no means the final conceivable perfection of body; other obedience, and a service to the spirit of more ethereal matter than as yet appears, may with good reason be supposed. Hence both from the comparative perfection of the human brain in relation to the past organization of matter for mind, and also from its imperfection in relation to a conceivable future, we may gain a true and profound insight into the prophetic significance of the present life. If it were not so, our hopes might fall. If indeed we were scientifically compelled to think that in this existing nervous system and physical organization, through which we now exist in communication with an external world, the last material adaptations for personal life were exhausted; if we were forced to assume

that in known physics and chemistry the end of all matter in its fitness for mind has been reached; then a halt would indeed be called to our faith, and we should stand at last, in the full energy of personal life, at the height of nature's achievement, but in the hopeless isolation of our self-consciousness, and, after all, ourselves no better than the beasts that perish. But it is not so. Are we not now discovering the insufficiency of all previous science of atomic matter? The last stroke of physical science has shivered the atom itself. It is displaying radiant energies before undreamed of. That last indivisible point of matter is caught in the act of setting free emanations and rays of different kinds and of amazing periods of duration. It might almost be said that the atom is found among nature's prophets. Physical science is speaking

as with new tongues. What matter ultimately is, what latent energies are yet to be revealed in the depths and silences of space, who can tell? What finite intelligence far back in the beginning of days could have imagined the forms and combinations into which the ether in the course of time has been transformed? Though a finite intelligence, before ever the worlds were created, had seen the Sower going forth to sow in the fields of infinite space, could such finite intelligence have conceived of the clusters of the stars, and the beauty of the earth, and the joy of life which it is ours to know? And the full harvest is not yet reaped. Who of us has a measuring rod for the way of further evolution? We who are just beginning to learn how much farther the Creator has gone with radiant matter than we had dreamed, cannot pre-

sume to say that he can go no farther either with it or us. Now before our eyes invisible and unsuspected rays of radium are revealed as sparkles of light by their impacts upon a prepared screen. Can we exclude from possible human experience celestial influences that may be as present and pervasive though as yet undetected? And if the dissolving of an atom is the letting loose of emanations hitherto all unknown, we may well hesitate to believe that the breaking up of this mortality can set free no finer radiances with which, as in a garment of light, the spirit may be clothed upon with immortality.

We have been thinking thus far of the unfinished personality of man on the bodily side; we find it reasonable to suppose that the natural may germinate into some more spiritualized embodiment. But besides this, in mind as

well as body, man is an unfinished being. He has been begun, but not ended. He has by no means exhausted as yet his personal dynamics. A man may have much to do in enlarging his own soul. And this insignificant earth, on which he has just come to himself, as a little child once said, is not big enough for him. Already in thought he transcends it. In purpose he outlives it. He has not time in this earthly life to attain his full maturity. His intellect is capable of indefinite growth; and he can love for eternity. Furthermore, even in the weakness of his mortality man is possessed of the will to live. That is a supernal virtue of personality. The personal will to live is a force with which the universe has to reckon. There is no energy so mighty as that; none save only the will of God. It defies the very powers that rise to over-

come it. Pascal's memorable word that, though man is as a reed, he is a thinking reed, and he is superior to the world that kills him because he knows that he dies, is profoundly true, likewise, of man's will to live even while he dies. So far forth as we can follow the will to live, in a true man it never ceases to be; even in dying it is active. For it has been observed with deep significance that man is not merely passive but active in dying. An animal will fly with instinctive fear from the peril that pursues it; man goes forth to meet his death. In purpose and in will he acts while he is dying as to the body. He goes down into the valley; often with conscious determination we may see him enter the dark waters. We may not follow him with our eyes as he goes through the mists up the heights beyond; but sometimes we may see him

taking with conscious self-control the last step—and he is gone; his communication with us is broken; but up to his latest breath, and even as his heart beats its last pulsation, the man is the same man we have always known, thinking, purposing, willing, loving, as he had always done. Death comes to him as another experience of life—another event to be met by his unbroken will to live. That personal will to live has been and is a renewing and constructive force. It has made the man what he is; and to some extent it has sustained and fashioned his mortal body. The will to live is a formative energy in relation to this present environment; why not then in relation to other environment? Herein is discovered a superior energy working in relation to a lower element; a spiritual power is disclosed, active and formative, in the midst of existing con-

ditions for its exercise. What can put a stop to its activity? Nothing that we know of. What may prevent its exercise in different conditions, in relation to material even more subservient perhaps to its fashioning than we may now apprehend?

One may fall back at this point into the old difficulty in which a desire to believe in immortality has often been swamped. Admit, it may be said, that all this is possible and seemingly quite natural; but after all no one knows. We have no experience of life except as bound to this body of death. This is true, but not the whole of the truth. We know ourselves not merely as bound to this mortality; we know ourselves now and here as mind bringing the body into subjection to itself; we have experience of ourselves in the body, but not altogether of it. We recognize this

body as of value to us; we do not recognize ourselves as belonging to it. We have been maintaining that in and through these bodies we live in a rich relationship with nature, all things being ours. But it does not follow that we are therefore to be disinherited when this body fails us. Even now while in the body we may be forming other connections, there may be growing finer faculties, for freer fellowship with nature,—the greater nature reaching beyond the stars. At all events present experience contains more than the fact of death; it comprehends the higher law and spiritual energy of life. We know something of the lordship of life, even though we die.

We are further reassured in this natural expectation of life by a significant fact which recent biology has added to our knowledge. Hitherto we have been

wont to assume that death came as a foe of life; now we are learning that death itself first entered into nature as the servant of life, and by it in the course of evolution the way was opened to more life and better. Death itself has proved to be a great means of developing more organized, sensitive, and responsive life in nature. Indeed the ascent of life would have been impossible, had it not been for the intervention of death. The natural history of death shows it to have been a minister of life. Throughout the whole process of evolution death has been the servant, and life the lord. Why should this law and service be revoked with the coming of man? The end of the evolution of species is the perfect individual. Why then, as death has served hitherto the upgrowth of species, should it not complete its ministry by setting free the

individual person, in whom all the past succession of species is fulfilled?

Whittier's familiar lines are thus seen to contain a double truth: "Life is ever lord of death"; and "Love can never lose its own." Both in body and in mind, in fellowship with nature, and in his own heart, man is made after the power of an endless life.

In the reasoning thus far pursued we have sought to follow real analogies between things natural and spiritual. Such analogies are to be distinguished from fanciful resemblances or merely illustrative representations. A fancy is an artificial composite of resemblances, put together, it may be, with pleasing skill; it is a mental association of similarities between things that may have no real affinities; it is like the accidental patterns that are to be seen with the turning of a kaleidoscope. But

the scientific use of the imagination is wholly different; an illuminative imagination is an extension of vision into the further truth, and along the real relations of things. It unifies in the mental conception what is really one in nature and life. Ruskin has rightly defined imagination as the power of seeing things as they are. It is a mental visualization of some harmonizing truth, some common principle, or vitalizing energy that runs through things that differ, and binds the worlds into a cosmic whole. In such use of the imagination, whether it be scientific or spiritual, we are but doing what that early modern astronomer did when he said he was thinking God's thoughts after him. So likewise a mediæval theologian, who had much of the intense modern passion for some vision of the ultimate Reality, St. Augustine,

gained a true imaginative perception of the higher order and dramatic unity of nature and history when he said, the creation is a poem of the Divine ideas.

Whenever we can trace real analogies between things natural and things spiritual, we can trust such principles with reasonable assurance. They are disclosures of the structural lines of the universe. They are the principles of reason that run through nature, and bind together all the spheres. It gives to our reason a sense of sureness when we find them and follow them. We shall not be liable to prove mistaken in our essential faiths, if we have good reason to believe that we are not chasing after illusive fancies, but are keeping in the way of the same law of life from one field to another, from the least to the greatest revelation of life, and pressing on in the way of the same law

of development toward the goal in the world to come. When knowledge reaches the borders of the material world, imaginative reason, continuing along the same lines, ventures, as far as it can, into the unknown, and forms a working theory concerning things supra-sensible. Immortality cannot in this way be demonstrated; but the continuance of life on the same principles, in accordance with real analogies, is rendered credible. Unbelief will thus appear to be more irrational, unnatural, and contradictory of known truths than belief. The immortal hope is the outcome of the best experience of life.

There are some men of scientific training who now would venture farther than this. They not only hold that real analogies, such as those with which these pages have been occupied, leave us with a reasonable hope of immor-

tality; they look with some confidence to see the progress of investigation push still farther back the confines of the known, and more than half expect that some sensible sign from beyond the grave may be credibly communicated as the result of further psychical researches. They ask whether it is not now possible for us to verify in some occult phenomena actual influences from disincarnate spirits. If it be so, faith, they think, hard pressed in conflict with the materialism of these days, may receive much needed help in a time of need. Even a slight extension of evidence of the continued existence of departed spirits, though it might bring little knowledge of their state, would prove a providential re-enforcement of our expectation of immortality.

Before accepting or declining altogether the help of such alleged com-

munications, we have need to wait for much more definite results of investigations of the border-land around our conscious life. Recent experiments in this direction have extended the range of the possible working of mind beyond the limit of the senses. Telepathy can hardly be regarded longer as a word without some psychic meaning. The threshold of consciousness, the subliminal consciousness, the powers of mind in abnormal states, and their limitations,—these and kindred phenomena indicate that there is something more for us still to know about ourselves, and that we may be possessed of latent faculties, and are capable of farther-reaching influence than we had supposed. It would not be a thing incredible if mind should be found in some cases to use a swift and extensive wireless telegraphy of its own. The

openness of the material texture and web of things is not a secret to physical science, however closed it seems to our eyes. The complex field of lines of force, the ceaseless pulsations of ethereal waves, the interpenetration of elemental energies, the play to and fro and everywhither of diverse motions,—all these newer ideas are easier for a trained scientific man to represent in his higher mathematics and to imagine in his working theories, than it is for the ordinary man to comprehend. This being so, it is unreasonable to regard any supra-sensible manifestations as unworthy scientific observation and analysis. It would be scientific presumption to regard as impossible any manifestations which might serve to extend knowledge in any direction. Nor do frequent exposures of fraud exhaust the field of abnormal or super-normal

psychic phenomena. Patient and prolonged research in this as in other fields, combined with scientific ingenuity in methods and instruments of precise experiment, may yet open definite knowledge in this outlying region of life. But the utmost that may safely be said now is, that around clear self-consciousness there seems to lie, as it were, a magnetic mental field pervaded by lines of force as yet untraced and undetermined.

While requiring this much from the scientific side in relation to such mysterious happenings, we may add another reflection from the religious point of view. Is it necessarily to be true of every generation since Christ to the end of time that though it seeks for a sign, no sign shall be given it? The age of his mighty works lies already in the far distance, and men generally are become

sceptical of all miracles. They cannot verify the evidences of the supernatural in the past, and they see none in the present. Christianity to-day is belief in Christ, not so much for the works' sake, but for all that the Christ has become in human history; for what he himself is now in the life of the world. But from this it is not of necessity to be concluded that ways of more direct spiritual manifestation, once perhaps open, have been forever closed. It is quite possible to conceive that new modes of spiritual communication might be providentially disclosed, if ever the need should arise for more evidential presence of the Spirit in the life of humanity. It is further possible to suppose that by knocking man some time may find doors opening outward into the unseen, which before were closed. We cannot therefore exclude as either

naturally or morally impossible such spiritual manifestations as at any time may present themselves for critical examination. A reserve of evidence for the immanence in nature of the transcendent God, as well as for our hope of life after death, may be providentially held back until in the progress alike of human knowledge and need man may be able to draw for himself upon such reserves of knowledge; until some generation may be scientifically wise enough to avail itself of the spiritual disclosures of the natural world, which it may need to save its higher life.

Be this as it may, immediate spiritual communications are not as yet part of the providential training by which we are to be made strong to hold and to practise our faith in immortality. We must live as immortals, if we would believe as immortals. There is little at

present to add to the modern argument for man's survival after death from the voluminous results of psychical research—little unless it be an increasing sense of wonder. The most competent investigators acknowledge that they know not much more than when they began; but they add that the little which they have learned leads them to think that there is much more which in time will be known concerning the spiritual influences which work within ourselves, and amid which we live.

To return from these speculations, finding no certain light in the flashings upon peculiarly sensitive minds of illumination from no common source, we stand again on sure ground when we rest our faith on the supreme fact of personality. We know in what we believe, when we realize what the personal life

contains within its own spiritual energy and will.

After all has been reasoned and said, one shadow sometimes will fall across a clear Christian faith: it is the doubt which arises from inability to imagine how these things can be. It is well to recognize the fact that the last difficulty of a well-reasoned and assured hope is a difficulty of the imagination. It is imagination that fails us, not reason that betrays us, in the very presence of death. Our thoughts become silent when we long to know how and where those who have vanished from our homes are living now.

In such hours of utter bereavement, our questionings return into our hearts unanswered. In utter inability to conceive of the present state of those who but yesterday were with us, we sit by our

fireside, having drawn the curtains to shut out the lonely mystery of the night, thinking of them as they were, and as living and loving still, nearer perhaps than we may know. Our memories become our prophets of the life, theirs and ours, which is to be; their remembered faces look down upon us, as our hopes, from the unseen.

In such moods, of one truth we may be assured: the splendid personal gifts of memory and imagination have not been bestowed upon us to empty our hearts of joy, and to fill them with visionless sorrow. They are powers meant to enrich and to sustain us in any trial and grief. They are always to be arrayed on the brave, bright, hopeful side of life. They should be trained and used to help us do happily our daily work. To the reasons for belief in immortality, therefore, something may

be added concerning the cultivation and exercise of imagination for the sake of rendering more real and vivid the spiritual side of our existence.

The aid of religious symbolism may be intelligently accepted for the purpose of quickening religious feelings and faith. All spiritual truths are brought to us in some symbolic representations. Words are symbols of realities. Images are not idols when they lend some nearer sense of reality to faith in that which is transcendent and divine. It is when the symbol is substituted for the reality; when a form of words is held as the divine revelation itself; when the sacramental emblems are received as in themselves the real presence, that idolatry of creed or worship may enter in. Hence what is needed for the present aid of faith is to choose those forms of representation of things invisible and

eternal that may fall in most naturally with our modern habits of mind. Every age must find for itself the forms and symbols best fitted and most natural to its thought. But it should use its full power of imagination in visualizing and rendering vivid its beliefs. It would be a barren age, scorched by its own light, if it should not create for itself a religious poetry and art. Modern science has made for itself symbols of forces and motions that run into the mathematical infinite. One must be possessed of power of imaginative representation to become a great discoverer in science. It is no less true that one must exercise the power of spiritual imagination to be a great believer. In either case we approach thereby into closer touch with the living truth; we see revealed the unifying principle, the fundamental reality. The poet of the spiritual is

always to be looked for. It may be said that only in the mediæval time, when the heavens were nearer earth than now, could Dante have traversed the celestial spheres and become the great poet of the invisible. And still the spell of his imagination falls upon our thought, though we know how far the stars have receded from us. But now physical theories are become too sublimated to render scenic imaginations of things celestial congenial to the modern mind. Nevertheless the poet of the ideal and the supersensible is not to be banished by the extension of knowledge. From our more intimate, as well as vaster knowledge of the universe, the poet of to-day and of to-morrow may draw fresh and rare material to weave into the imagery of his song of human trust and immortal hope.

Every one who would render real to

himself his personal faith is called to make right and helpful use of his imagination, to be in his own thoughts the poet of his faith. He must accept the help of the spiritual suggestions of the world in which he sees and lives. He must not only read the parables of the Master who without a parable spake not to his disciples; he must seek to imitate the Master in the parable-making habit. Believers may train their ears to hear the higher meanings in common things; they may open their eyes to discern the ever fresh suggestiveness of nature. A familiar landscape, some remembered scene, a look out of the window, a momentary glory in the sky, or evening peace on the hills, may awaken thoughts beyond all words. From the silence of nature a voice from beyond may seem about to speak. A gleam over the face of nature may come and go as a spiritual

expression, and leave us feeling ourselves in the presence of an infinite friendliness. From such spiritual aspects of nature and intimations of something diviner than is seen, we return to take up the commonplace of life with thoughts refreshed and a cheerful light of spirit within us to brighten the daily care.

Even passing fancies of what things unseen may be like, though they be as children's imaginations or as our dreams, if they be not held too fast, and be suffered to fall from us as quickly as they come, may have a quickening touch, and impart a happier sense of invisible presences we fain would see. Freely and gratefully then we are to use, as best we may, the gift to faith of the symbolizing imagination. No poet's utmost flight can enter within the veil; but the least spiritual imagination may help us trust that it is only

a veil between the earthly and the heavenly.

There will come indeed times when all symbolism will lose its quickening virtue, and every imagination fail; when the mystery of the world overshadows us and faith itself seems lost as in a vast and homeless wonder; whether there be prophecies or tongues, they shall cease; but love never faileth. At such times when all else fails, we shall have need of the last lesson which the great Parable Maker taught his disciples. For when the hour of his departure drew nigh, he spake to them without a parable. He did not then bid them look abroad and see the sower going forth to sow, or to lift up their eyes and behold the fields white for the harvest. He did not remind them of the lilies of the field or the birds of the air. He opened to them no

visions of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. He looked into their hearts, and spake directly from his own. He himself was to them in that last hour the revelation of the Father, His God and their God. Only these two simplest things—the bread of life and the cup of communion —were the symbols which he blessed to bring him always to remembrance. His last and most definite revelation of the life beyond death he put in the plain and common language of our human homes and fellowship; for he said of his and their future state such personal words as these: I, thou, we: all made perfect in one: I will come to you: ye shall see me: where I am, there ye may be also: continue ye in my love. Thus he spoke of what shall be, as one might speak of what had been. He taught what heaven is in personal words.

Years afterward that disciple who had known him best, in his last letters to those who had fellowship with him in the life that he had seen manifested in the Master, drops all the apocalyptic imagery of the city of God; St. John likewise puts his sure hope of immortality in the same simple words of the abiding personal life; for he said without a parable: Perfect love casteth out fear: now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is.

"And they shall see his face." The perfect symbol of the spirit is the face. It is the clear disclosure to our eyes of the other than ourself. The fairest thing that we know is not a star, "when only one is shining in the sky"; it is not the beauty of the earth; it is the human face. What does it signify?

What does it mean to us? One of Darwin's best studies was his account of the physiology of the expressions in animals and in man. He has taught us the alphabet and some of the simple combinations of letters in the natural language of expression. The human face has acquired a language of its own. It is the first speech of intelligence; it is the one universal language which all men understand at sight. It is the direct communication of spirit to spirit; it is at once question and answer; face answereth to the face of man. In this expressiveness of a human face there is something more than the forms of the Darwinian grammar of it to be explained; what is it within us that makes use of these expressive changes of the face? What is it that conveys by these expressive variables a meaning all its own? What spirit is this that plays at

will upon this marvellous refinement of gross matter, causing it to reveal its secrets, or veiling them at its pleasure? The eye is material, but the light in it is human. There is something in a glance that is more than the action of a muscle. Physiological changes, with marvellous quickness, telegraph meanings of mind and heart, messages of love and joy, of care and sorrow, of will and purpose, of life and death. The human face divine is the fairest product of evolution which our eyes may see; and it is of and for the spiritual. Other forms fairer and more spiritual there may be, for it doth not yet appear what we shall be;—the face of an angel, the transfigured countenance of the Lord on the holy mount, and the faces of our blessed dead, whom after a little while we shall see again, the same but changed as from glory unto glory.

Here the belief in immortality must rest before the revelation of the personal life in its full power, at its highest and its best in the Son of man. Here reasoning from nature ends, and faith abides, at the last ascent of life, on the height where He to whom the Spirit was given without measure looked up into the heavenlies, and knew the Father. The sciences must take account of the perfection of life in the person of Christ. We cannot live and die as though the sun had not risen, for the light of his spirit now fills our skies. Modern science will not think the whole process and intent of evolution through, until it shall come to the Christ, and behold all that the Jesus of history has become, and now is in the light of the world. No full and final answer to our human questionings of life and death and the world to come can be given ex-

cept in the presence of the perfect manifestation of life in the Man of men, as we behold his glory, even the glory of the Father which was from the beginning—the glory that invests all lives which are lived in the same mind that was in him.

For this generation, then, the ultimate reason for belief in the transfiguration of this body into the spiritual, and the continuance of the whole personal life after death, is not so much the witness of the first disciples to the empty tomb, or any possible manifestation to the senses of what lies within the veil; it is above all that great assertion of Peter's Pentecostal faith that it is not possible for God's Holy One to see corruption. The living Christ cannot be holden by death. The impossibility of death overcoming life, such life as was seen in the Christ, such life as is

witnessed in men of his Spirit,—that was the last, full assurance of the Apostolic faith; and it is our reasonable hope in the midst of all knowledge. Having fellowship in the life which is too divine to perish, we wait for the fulfilment of faith in vision. The perfection of sense is the eye. And God is light. The Scriptures of the world's imperishable faith call us alike the children of the resurrection and the children of the light. Faith shall end in perfect vision.

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